Compression Therapy

Information for Patient and Carers

There are various forms of compression therapy however the purpose of compression is to support with the movement of fluid also known as “oedema” to ensure that fluid is either moved to or remains in the right place to enable drainage back into the circulatory system.

Compression therapy is provided by

- Compressive bandage systems
- Compression Hoisery (Stockings)
- Compression wraps.

The practitioner will discuss and suggest the therapy which will be most appropriate for you.

To be most effective, compression therapy needs to be worn as advised by the practitioner.

Compression bandages

These are often described as intensive therapies and mostly used to manage lower leg ulceration if felt to be appropriate by the practitioner and should only be applied by an appropriately trained health professional, or alternative arrangements may be made on discussion with your practitioner following a holistic assessment.

The nurse will decide the frequency of the bandage change, this is often dependent on levels of exudate (leaking), skin (is it vulnerable) and the speed that the oedema reduces. The bandages are designed to stay in place for up to 7 days from application.

It is important to understand that dressings do not heal wounds; they facilitate healing by assisting with the management of a wound bed and its conditions. It is often the compression bandages that makes the most impact on the speed and effectiveness of wound healing.

How will the bandaging help you?

The veins in your legs are vessels that carry blood back from your foot towards your heart. These veins have one-way valves that when working well ensure the blood remains in the vessel and continues to move up the leg.

However, sometimes as you get older or if they become damaged, the valves in your veins don’t work as well. Subsequently the blood/fluid works its way back into the surrounding tissues also known as oedema.

Compression bandages apply pressure to help to move oedema (excess/unnecessary fluid, bacteria, protein, etc) from your leg and moves it back into the correct system. This helps the good fluid to get to and from the wound, which helps to support wound healing.

compassionate care

Compression garments

Compression stockings are often used following the use of compression bandages or when oedema is identified and a person has been deemed as being at risk of ulceration should the practitioner deem is appropriate following an assessment.

Compression garments are available in a variety of different sizes, colours and styles. Your nurse will help you to find the most appropriate compression garment which fits comfortably. If you are unable to apply the garments independently it would be beneficial to seek external support to assist with the management.

If the practitioner has fitted you with a wrap garment or stockings, you will be shown how to remove and reapply it so you can bathe or shower and manage your garments.

Self Help

What can you do to help?

Exercise: remain active and mobile or perform chair exercises if possible to encourage venous return as this encourages the calf muscles in your legs to work which helps the veins to pump the fluid/blood back up the leg via the veins or lymphatics. This reduces congestion which in turn will support healing.

Elevate: when resting put your feet up, ideally raising your legs higher than your hips. This can be done by lying on your couch or intermittently resting on your bed throughout the day. This helps to minimise your leg oedema through encouraging drainage.

Sleeping in bed at night and not in an armchair is essential to support with the reduction of oedema in your legs, ankles and feet. If you are struggling to achieve this, please discuss this with a practitioner at the earliest point.

Adopting a **healthy lifestyle** by stopping smoking (seeking cessation support), maintaining a healthy diet, reducing your alcohol intake and not using recreational drugs more specifically intravenous which is injecting unprescribed drugs into your veins.

Eat a balanced diet; high in protein and vitamins, which keeps your skin strong and helps wounds to heal – ask your nurse for additional information on changes you can make to your diet.

Good skin care is essential in preventing deterioration and ulceration. Regularly washing your legs and apply prescribed emollients daily. **You may be asked to remove your bandages and wash your legs and apply emollient before a nurse attends to reapply your bandages. You may also be asked to obtain a bowl and bin liners as this is essential to reducing risk of infection.**

Avoid excess heat by not sitting too close to the fire or other sources of heat.

What do you need to observe?

Monitor for signs of infection or other problems:

- More wound leakage than usual
- More pain than usual
- Increasing redness around the wound
- An unusual smell
- Wound is getting bigger
- Feeling generally unwell

Contact your health care professional or NHS 111 if you are worried.

Participate in your care

Become more involved in your treatment and decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment and advised on ways that you can participate in delivering your own care.

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

Reducing the risk of recurrence

Unfortunately, leg ulcer recurrence is common and often patients experience multiple episodes of ulceration. The main prevention for recurrence is life-long compression therapy, either hosiery or wrap system. In addition to this the practitioner may consider referring you into vascular as venous intervention could be beneficial however this will be assessed by the practitioner.

It is also vital that good skin care is maintained with regular washing, emollient and consistent use of your prescribed compression garment, which will need replacing 3 – 6 monthly. Once your ulcer has healed you will be discharged from the nurses and will need to maintain your own skin integrity either independently, with assistance from a relative or you will require assistance from carers.

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

Can I still shower with bandages?

Yes, the practitioner could request a waterproof protector for the bandages which are available on prescription or to buy at a pharmacy for bathing/showering.

Will bandages affect my mobility?

It may alter your mobility for a short period, if you are usually mobile you should still be able to mobilise as you were prior to bandages being applied. Sometimes it can take some getting used to, however you should be cautious until you feel comfortable or you have adapted. Exercise is encouraged when wearing compression therapies.

Can I still wear normal footwear?

You can wear normal footwear, however, in some situations you may wish to either buy larger footwear or, the practitioner may request a boot to be prescribed when you are in compression bandages.

When wearing compression garments, you should be able to wear your own footwear.

What can I do if I have pain?

When compression therapy is first applied it is important that if you have or feel any adverse effects such as increasing pain or discomfort you should discuss this with a health professional who has a sound knowledge of compression. It can however take some time to get used to, therefore, it is possible that taking regular analgesia may assist with managing this should it be prescribed. Ask your doctor or nurse if you need any further advice.

If you develop severe pain please take off the compression therapy immediately. Keep your legs raised with your heels above your hips in a sitting or lying position and contact your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Community Administrative team
Beechwood Health Centre
60B Keighley Road
Halifax
HX2 8AL

Telephone: 01422 652291

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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